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Classified By: PRT and Sub-National Governance Director Valerie C. Fowl
er for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

11. (C) Infighting between key leaders in Uruzgan Province has diminished the hope for improved security and increased development in Uruzgan that was generated in late 2007 by the appointment of "strong governance" (reftel) in the form of Governor Hamdam and Provincial Chief of Police Juma Gul Hemat. While the political landscape in Uruzgan had been relatively quiet for the last six months, the month of March saw a series of significant and worrying political and security developments.

Hamdam Still in Uruzgan

12. (C) The promise Governor Hamdam showed during his first year in office (albeit with a great deal of prodding) has recently evaporated, and the now largely inactive governor no longer hides the fact that he is biding his time waiting for bigger things. Hamdan, originally from Zabul and Wardak but tapped for Uruzgan after living in London for several years, told PRTOff that he was surprised to still be in Uruzgan, having thought President Karzai would have "promoted him" by now to a better position, possibly as governor of Mazar-e Sharif or a job in Kabul. Hamdam,s lack of interest in his position or the welfare of the province creates a leadership gap. (Comment: There seems to be a pattern with Governor Hamdam whereby he improves after significant and repeated prodding/hand-holding by the international community, but slips back into ineffectiveness with every international community rotation. End Comment.) In addition, the governor is regularly absent from the province for extended periods of time, a problem that the previous PRTOff also raised with the Governor. Hamdam maintains that he needs the same regular breaks the internationals receive (the Dutch receive two weeks off once every six weeks worked) because the "stress of this job is too much," though these days the governor rarely leaves his compound. (Note: the last time the Governor traveled beyond Tarin Kowt was in January to the Baluchi Valley, despite repeated attempts by the Dutch since to get him out to the districts.)

13. (S) When he travels outside the province, Hamdam refuses to delegate authority; Hamdam told both the senior Dutch civilian representative for Task Force Uruzgan (TFU) and PRTOff that "no one else can be trusted to do things properly" while he is away. In meetings during his absence, department heads of line ministries said they lacked direction from the governor and thus did not have much work. What little provincial government actually exists in Uruzgan comes to a grinding halt in Hamdam,s absence. (Comment: All international elements with whom PRTOff has spoken agree that

the governor's refusal to delegate likely stems from the carefully crafted series of payoffs he is believed to have orchestrated, as allocating money is one of the few governmental functions Hamdam performs. For example, it is documented and known to all that the governor pockets thirty ANP salaries every quarter for police who no longer guard his compound, having been replaced at his request by ANA officers. End comment.)

Deteriorating Security

14. (S) The security situation in the province has continued to deteriorate since the widely-publicized peace jirga - which has been completely without follow up - the Governor hosted in December. A suicide attack February 2 on the police station in the provincial capital, with collusion from inside the ANP, left twenty-one police officers dead and kicked off the governor's public smear campaign against Provincial Chief of Police (PCoP) Juma Gul Hemat, whom Hamdam accused of being complicit in the attacks. Another suicide bomber was fortunately detected and arrested that same day in Deh Rawod, in western Uruzgan. A series of rocket attacks on Camp Holland (the PRT) since late January prompted new security restrictions in the camp and a number of operations to take out "the Rocketman," as Hemat was dubbed.

15. (S/NF) The situation in Khas Uruzgan has dramatically turned for the worse. This district in northeastern Uruzgan hosts no ISAF troops, only a Special Forces (SF) presence. At Fire Base Anaconda, the "white space" in which the team can operate has been reduced to less than two kilometers

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around the camp. Perhaps most disturbingly, recent information suggests that a number of key people among the large local Hazaran population, which in the past was anti-Taliban and friendly toward U.S. forces, have been turned.

16. (S/NF) The Cultural Advisor for the Dutch PRT, who is very active in tribal relations, reports that there has been a lack of real progress in coalition forces holding the Baluchi Valley, a key transit point between Tarin Kowt (TK) and eastern Uruzgan. Although there have been a number of operations conducted recently north of TK in Derafshan, TFU has no serious plans for a regular presence via checkpoint or ANA outpost there. Such an outpost is sorely needed. Despite the best relationship between a TFU and SF commander in several cycles, a cognitive dissonance remains between coalition partners on tactical and in some instances, political approaches. Regular complaints from all coalition partners of a lack of information sharing is also unhelpful in the current security climate.

Serious Challenges Facing ANP

17. (S/NF) Adding to the security situation facing Uruzgan is the general distrust in both the population and among GIROA officials of the ANP, which increased dramatically after word spread of the complicity of ANP officers in February's suicide bombing. Governor Hamdam's continued public verbal attacks on the ANP, and particularly on the leadership of PCoP Juma Gul, erode the trust even further and smell of a power play. Continuing and systemic problems with salary payments to the police have led to widespread 'unrest' and a series of 'defections' among police officers across the province. The tashkil (manning level) contains salaries for 1347 police but numbers estimated between 1700 and 1800 are working checkpoints and police substations, forcing the PCoP to constantly juggle accounts to pay the police and ensure that the checkpoints remain manned. Although the ANA are better trained and enjoy considerably more respect among the population, they are spread thin. The arrival of the 3rd Kandak this summer offers hope, but the key to provincial

security in Uruzgan lies with the largely untrained and undisciplined ANP force.

Political Discord

¶18. (S/NF) The Dutch PRT is trying to mediate a conflict between the Ghilzai in Mirabad and the Barakzai in Patan. The Dutch PRT Cultural Advisor, an academic who has lived and worked in Afghanistan for years and published several books on the country, expressed his concern about the apparent dissolving of Barakzai unity under Mohammed Daoud. Daoud, the official but somewhat disputed District Chief of Chora (named after the death of his father Rozi Khan at the hands of ISAF forces in October 2008), is competing for power with his uncle Shah Mohammed. These tensions have escalated and involved ISAF when Shah Mohammed was told by another tribal elder to "sit down and shut up" when he protested during a meeting after Commander TFU said ISAF would only deal with the "official" Barakzai leader, Mohammed Daoud.

¶19. (S/NF) ISAF also has been mediating the recent upheaval in Deh Rawod where local tribal leaders openly showed dissatisfaction with District Chief Said Usman. Behind the scenes of all these machinations remains the constant presence of former governor and Popalzai powerbroker Jan Mohammed Khan (JMK), who appears to be attempting to regain influence, with persistent rumors circulating that he will again be governor if/when Karzai wins reelection. His current motivations in his dealings with both Governor Hamdam and PCoP Gul remain unclear.

Comment

¶10. (S/NF) During the upcoming fighting season, there is a significant possibility that the Taliban will exploit local rifts and the weakness of the ANP to increase their power base. With no noticeable normal winter lull in fighting in Uruzgan this year and SF losses higher than expected early in this deployment, the situation will likely continue to deteriorate. Interestingly, all international players with whom PRTOff has spoken agree with JMK's assertion that "nothing good will happen in Uruzgan if the Governor and PCoP cannot work together." At the moment, the conflict between the Governor and the PCoP remains the central focus for the civilians in TFU attempting to improve governance. During Hamdam's last visit to Kabul, he told PRTOff that his

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primary topic of conversation with President Karzai, Independent Directorate of Local Governance Director Popal and Minister of Interior Atmar was Gul's ouster. His continued tenure as PCoP is likely due to JMK's support and influence. A big part of Uruzgan's misfortune is that while it is not strategically important enough to garner much support or resources from Kabul, it unfortunately does have historic and tribal ties for the President that ensure just enough meddling to hamper progress.

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